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# The Arlington Advocate

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The Community Newspaper Since 1872

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## Teacher layoffs

By CAROL BEGGY  
Advocate Editor

Forty-seven tenured teachers, including two administrators and some staff who had been in the Arlington schools since 1970, have been placed on the lay-off roster.

School Committee members made the lay-off or "reduction in force" (RIF) decisions Tuesday as they began to carve deeply into the school budget.

Those 47 people on the RIF list are added to the nearly 30 non-tenured teachers the committee marked for possible layoffs last month. Under contractual agreements and state law, the town had to notify teachers by this week if they will be laid off.

"This is very painful. However, it must be done to protect ourselves, honor the contract, protect the rights of teachers and for personal planning for those people whose lives and careers are being affected by these depressing reductions," said Superintendent Walter Devine in a statement.

Of the more than 70 teachers on the RIF list, some will be hired back because of retirements and leaves, school officials said. However, all of the teachers who could be laid off must be included on the RIF list by the legal deadline.

"Some staff will be recalled," said Devine, "however, 35-plus positions are being eliminated from our system."

Under the RIF guidelines, the name of each of the 47 teachers was called off as the School Committee voted to put them on list. (See SCHOOL, page 4A)

## CRUNCH TIME

## Budgets get votes

By P.L. BUSTAMANTE  
Advocate Assistant Editor

Town Meeting members are knee-deep in budget talks, facing \$61 million in town finances for fiscal year 1990.

Approving revenue expenditure at a rate of approximately \$100,000 per minute, Town Meeting members indulged in speed voting Monday night, passing 23 of the 34 town department budgets before adjourning until Wednesday's meeting.

The budgets currently being decided upon will take effect on July 1, 1989, which is the beginning of fiscal 1990.

"I remember Elsie Fiore (precinct 2) telling me from the back of town hall 'you sound like the voice of doom,'" said Finance Committee Chairman Robert F. O'Neill, introducing article 40 and the budget debate. "This year is no different. I predicted this would be the year of the cutbacks, and it is."

Many town department budgets and sub-budgets were cut by thousands of dollars, including community safety, which was down \$64,000 in the police services department alone. The School Department budget dropped \$80,000. Both of those budgets were expected to be discussed at Wednesday's Town Meeting, which was after The Advocate's deadline.

(See BUDGET, page 4A)

## Local income tax

By P.L. BUSTAMANTE  
Advocate Assistant Editor

A local income tax is officially up for Statehouse discussion. Senator Richard A. Kraus, D-Arlington, and a small group of legislators recently presented a package of two bills proposing a local income tax to generate new revenue for cities and towns squeezed by Proposition 2½'s tax limits.

The plan was filed in the state Senate two weeks ago and in the House one week ago. It is aimed at providing relief for financially strapped cities and towns without depending on Proposition 2½ overrides.

If passed, it will "broaden the base of taxes available to local government," said Kraus, who is also Senate co-chairman of the state Local Aid Commission.

Currently municipalities raise revenue mainly from property taxes, revenue that was limited to an increase of no more than 2.5 percent per year with the institution of Proposition 2½ eight years ago.

Many towns and cities are now feeling the strains of the law, which was aimed at reducing government waste. Arlington is struggling with budget cuts severe enough to require heavy cutting in services.

If passed, the new income tax would be collected with state taxes, increasing the 5 percent earned income tax to 5½ percent, and the 10 percent tax to 11 percent.

(See KRAUS, page 4A)

On Great Meadows:

## TM wants board, commissions to work in tandem

By JOHN FITZPATRICK  
Special to The Advocate

Town Meeting members want selectmen to consult the Conservation Commission and Park and Recreation Commission before any changes are made at the Great Meadows.

Members overwhelmingly passed a resolution on May 3 that calls "upon the Board of Selectmen... to advise and consult with the Conservation Commission and any other interested town boards... before making decisions that would affect the meadows future," supporters said.

Discussion over the nearly-180-acre of peat wetland, located in Lexington but owned by Arlington, went on for nearly two hours during the meeting, and a motion to terminate debate was defeated twice before Town Meeting members voted on the resolution.

A resolution does not have the weight of a bylaw change, but does record the wishes of Town Meeting on an issue.

What started out late last year as a seemingly innocuous study the Arlington Board of Selectmen commissioned with an engineering firm and an environmentalist to define the borders of the wetlands, quickly became a major concern when residents learned that the study might be used in an attempt to turn the meadows into a golf course.

The Arlington Conservation Commission (ACC) has pointed out in the past few months — that "it was not what was done (concerning the study that the selectmen commissioned) but the way that it was done" which disturbed the conservation board. "The issue," Whelie said, "goes straight to the heart of open town government."

According to the ACC, the selectmen, who have jurisdiction over the meadows, had contracted the study to define its wetland borders without notifying the commission, without including the commission in any of the information-gathering process. (See MEADOWS, page 3A)

## Symmes Hospital seeks input on future service

By DAVID P. HAMILTON  
Special to The Advocate

Larry Davis, an 18-year employee of Choate-Symmes Health Services, seemed to speak for many of his fellow employees last Wednesday when he stood and told nearly 50 assembled Arlingtonians, "It's really striking, this amount of residential involvement. It's a joy to see."

The occasion for Davis' comment was an open meeting held in town hall by the Community Needs Determination Committee, a body of Arlington and Woburn citizens formed to assess the impact that Choate-Symmes service cuts might have on their respective communities.

The health service has been in

financial jeopardy since January, when Gov. Michael Dukakis announced the state would withhold nearly \$37 million in funds promised to hospitals under the Universal Health Care bill.

Nearly \$2.5 million was earmarked for Choate-Symmes over the next three years, and the shortfall has led it to seek rate relief from the state.

The Hospital Conversion Board granted relief amounting to 25 percent of the health service's regular fees under the condition that Choate-Symmes reconsider its offered services in order to re-establish financial viability.

Cost-cutting proposals now under (See SYMMES, page 5A)

Pit stop



One of the eight huge transformers that have been traveling through Arlington on route to Ayer stopped at Broadway Plaza for about 30 minutes earlier Sunday morning to fix a hydraulic line. The transformers come through town early on Sunday mornings via Broadway to Mass. Avenue and on to Route 2. Used for new power stations, the transformers measure several hundred feet. At least three more of the machines are expected to be brought through town in the coming months. One of the transformers already brought through town is damaged and will have to be returned to Boston, officials said.

(Joe Brown photo)

## Center project has funds

The final phase of Arlington Center's renovation project can go forward now that the state has given approval for a new financing plan.

Developed by Town Manager Donald R. Marquis, Director of Planning and Community Development Alan McLennen Jr., and State Sen. Richard A. Kraus (D-Arlington), the plan involves the deferral of repayment of the grant that the town received for the Senior Center at the Central School.

This new arrangement became necessary when the state postponed grants to the town for the project due to fiscal problems.

The Town Commons project involves not only landscaping the new triangle at Mystic Street and Mass Ave but also moving the Historic Jefferson Cutter House to the Center.

The project could not be deferred because of the time limit on some of the grants involved in completing the project.

Last week's approval from the state allows the project to go forward with the cash flow arriving at the proper places in a round-about way.

The town will still use Community Development Block Grant funds initially to execute the contract for construction, according to McLennen.

The CDBG funds will then be reimbursed with money from the Central School. The money would otherwise be used to pay off a state loan.

When the state's promised money does come through, the Central School's state loan will be paid off, making the recently shakey and often-times delinquent state funds more certain, according to McLennen.

The CDBG funds would be termed a "temporary construction loan," according to McLennen.

"The principal advantage of this is that it means we can do this now," said McLennen.

The Center's \$2 million construction project began in late spring 1988, with most of the disruptive work finished by the fall.

Now that the project has the necessary state and federal funding, and McLennen has reactivated contracts with architects working on the (See CENTER, page 6A)

## Arlington Center retailer closes shop

By ANNE-MARIE SELTZER  
Special to The Advocate

The Shephard and the Lamb, a retail store specializing in natural fibre clothing and non-plastic toys for children, closed its doors at 449 Mass. Ave. on May 6 after three years in business. Co-owner David Newhouse cited "personal reasons" for closing the store, after attempts to sell the business failed. Frank Pasciuto, the landlord of the property, is hopeful that he will be able to find "a quality business that will be good for Arlington" to fill the space beginning Aug. 1.

Newhouse "regretted seeing the business close because we had work-

ed hard to make it something special and to contribute to the area and Arlington Center. We had a very happy relationship with our customers and the business was running in the black.

"The reasons for wanting to sell the business are personal and they are what they are, however, we were hoping to sell the store to another party. A few people were interested, but they changed their minds for their own reasons."

One of those reasons seemed to be associated with the rental price of the property. Newhouse, who subleased the property from Richard Sacco for \$2,130 per month, said that

Pasciuto was planning to increase the rent approximately 40 percent when the new lease went into effect on Aug. 1. For a time, Newhouse had a sign in his storefront stating that fact.

Pasciuto was "very upset" when he heard about the sign on May 1 and he immediately called Newhouse and asked him to remove the sign, which he did. "The information on that sign was incorrect, and it wasn't a fair thing for Mr. Newhouse to do," said Pasciuto. "He approached me in March about renewing the lease. My exact words to him were: 'Let me know what you can pay and we'll go from there.' He also never

told me he was planning to move out."

According to Pasciuto, the new rent will be negotiable. "I won't know how much I will charge for the space until I actually sit down and start talking to an interested party. Rents aren't just a cut and dry situation. In business, you have to be willing to negotiate, and treat everyone as an individual," he said.

Commenting on the subjects of rents in Arlington Center in general, Newhouse said, "I've talked to other merchants in the Center and there is widespread concern over the rents the landlords want. The rent is (See RETAILER, page 3A)

## Register to vote by May 19

Next Friday, May 19, will be the last day to register for the special election of Saturday, June 10.

Registrations are held in the town clerk's office in town hall Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Two additional registration times have been scheduled before the deadline: Saturday, May 13, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Friday, May 19, from 9 a.m. until 10 p.m.

Any citizen of the United States who will be 18 years of age or older by the day of the town election, not being a person under guardianship, and not being temporarily or permanently disqualified by law because of corrupt practices in respect to elections, who is a resident of the town of Arlington may apply for registration.

At the June 10 special election, voters will be asked whether they support an override of Proposition 2½, a tax cap which limits the amount taxes can be raised town-wide to 2.5 percent annually.

# Who pays environmental bill?

**By PATRICIA MULDOON**  
**Special to The Advocate**  
**Who Pays The State's Environmental Bill?**  
*(Editor's Note: The following is one of the series of articles by the League of Women Voters related to recycling and waste management.)*  
The state of Massachusetts is initiating bold measures to reduce certain environmental pollutants. At the same time, the hazardous waste cleanup program, which requires tax dollars, is losing support. Crucial decisions will be made this spring in the Legislature over who will pay the cost for a cleaner environment.  
Governor Michael Dukakis just announced that Massachusetts is launching the toughest program in the nation to battle acid rain. New regulations limit sulfur dioxide emissions from power plants and large factories. (Boston Edison is not affected.) New regulations are also in place to curb the mounting summertime ozone levels, caused in part by gasoline

tumes.  
In the Statehouse, support is building to enact two landmark bills to minimize the amount of pollution released into the environment. The toxic-use-reduction bill reduces industrial pollutants at their source. The solid-waste-reduction and recycling bill places a 3-cent tax on any package that is not made with recycled materials. Funds generated by the tax will help establish regional recycling programs.  
Both bills are strongly supported by Senator Richard A. Kraus and by Representatives Robert A. Havern III and Mary Jane Gibson. Representative Gibson said that, "One of the problems in our society is that we don't pay the full cost of things. We need to take disposal costs into account. This (recycling) bill is about truth in pricing."  
Not all the news is good for the environment. Mandated environmental cleanup may be severely curtailed. According to MASS-pig, the budget recently passed

by the House of Representatives slashes funding for hazardous-waste cleanup from \$21.25 million to \$14 million, eliminating almost 300 staff members. In the Northeast Region, the Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE) lists 41 unstaffed toxic-waste sites that threaten or currently contaminate water supplies. They have no staff to clean up dangerous landfills.  
If the Senate approves the House budget, the toxic waste cleanup program would be crippled. The Senate must weigh the immediate budgetary restraints against the more expensive long-term costs to the environment, economy and people's health. Legislators need to hear from those who believe that the cleanup of toxic waste cannot wait. A vote is expected this month.  
The battle for a cleaner environment is being waged at all levels, from the state to local stores. Individuals who voice con-

cern can bring about changes. Highland Supermarket Manager Tom McInerney announced, "Starting next week, all our plastic bags will be biodegradable. We made the change because customers are conscious of the environment."  
In other developments, DEQE is seeking input from communities and industry as it develops the commonwealth's Solid Waste Masterplan, now in its second draft. A one-year moratorium on licensing new incinerators is in effect in order to promote recycling. Massachusetts incinerates one-third of its solid waste, compared to the national average of 6 percent. Only 7 percent of the trash flow is recycled, mostly due to the bottle bill. The current goal calls for 35 percent to be composted and recycled, coupled with a 10-percent reduction in waste output.  
*(Patricia Muldoon is a member of the League of Women Voters and a resident of Arlington.)*

## LIBRARY NEWS

### Memorial gifts



Maureen Copithorne (left), president of the Arlington Garden Club gives Library Director Maryellen Remmert-Loud one of the books the club is donating to the town library in memory of deceased members.  
(George C. Ferrar photo)

# Arlington Center for Arts growing fast

Last year at an Arlington Arts Council dinner, Nancy Kriebel, a local artist and medical illustrator was sitting next to David Whit-tredge, a painter and technical writer. The two talked about how great it would be if Arlington had an art center, like those in the surrounding towns of Somerville, Cambridge, Belmont, and Lexington.  
Soon after, the two artists and a writer named Paula Gassmann (now of Lexington) met to discuss the idea of establishing such an art center for the town.  
After meeting for most of one summer the small group sought out a few other artists in Arlington who were also looking for a place close to

home to share their work. They found Steve Carter, a professor of music at Berklee College of Music in Boston, and Jean Flanagan a poet and fiction writer.  
Together this small group, now the Board of Directors of the Arlington Center for the Arts Inc., planned a first meeting — held on rainy night after Thanksgiving at the Fox Library. Thirty people joined the group at the meeting, and the dream that began with two people sprang to life and became the Arlington Center for the Arts Inc. (ACA).  
Today the Arlington Center for the Arts Inc. is an interdisciplinary group with nearly 70 members. To demonstrate to the town that there are many artists living and working in the Arlington community who would like a center, the group recently presented a proposal to the town for space in the soon-to-be closed Gibbs Jr. High School. In addition, the ACA is holding an Arts Festival for the town on Saturday, May 13.  
The festival will be held at the town hall, the Unitarian-Universalist Church, and the Robbins Library from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and features an art exhibit, literary readings, musical, dance, and theatrical performances.

Local businesses have been most supportive of the ACA and its Festival. Their contributions will help pay for the rental of the Town Hall, Police, and a Church Sexton as well as provide food and refreshments for all who attend.  
**Portrait of the president**  
In his spare time, David Whit-tredge is president of the Arlington Center for the Arts, Inc. (ACA) a local group that plans to establish an arts center in Arlington. He is also a visual artist who does exciting and innovative work. "Art," he said "is a unique way to communicate." He recently won the "Best of Category" at the Arlington Arts Council Arts Exhibit for his work in 3-D painting, an intimate art that involves making body rubbings with charcoal onto paper. From the rubbings Dave then creates a sculptured 3-D drawing.  
In addition to his arts interests, Dave works as a technical writer. After a full day of work, which begins at 6 a.m., he usually has dinner and spends some time with his family. Then at 8 p.m. he slips into his studio in Cambridge and

works at being an artist, putting in three to four hours each evening, five days a week, and longer on weekends.  
As do many other artists in Arlington, evidenced by the ACA's growing membership, Dave would like to work closer to home, in Arlington, with other artists like himself.  
Dave is a graduate of the Museum School, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and has received the prestigious Mass. Artists Fellowship in painting as well as a Traveling Scholarship from the Museum School, the Museum of Fine Arts. He has exhibited his work at many fine galleries and museums, including Northeastern University Art Gallery and the Museum of Fine Arts.  
Over the last few months Dave hasn't been able to spend much time on his art work, because he has been devoting his time to creating a center for the arts in Arlington and to holding an Arts Festival in town on Saturday, May 13. "It has been like working another part-time job for me," he says, "as well as for the members, the Board of Directors of ACA, and the festival coordinators who have pulled together the Arts Festival."  
The Arlington Center for the Arts Inc. is sponsoring an Arts Festival on Saturday, May 13, featuring local artists, writers, musicians, and craftspeople at the town hall, the Unitarian-Universalist Church, and the Robbins Library.  
The Arts Festival is supported, in part, by the Massachusetts Arts Lottery as administered by the Arlington Arts Lottery Council.

### Salute to Irving Berlin

Composer Irving Berlin is 101 years old this month and to celebrate this milestone in the life of a great American icon, the movie musical "Call Me Madam" will be shown at the Fox Branch Library this Friday, May 12 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.

Based on the stage musical that was Berlin's last big success, it tells the story of a Washington hostess (Perle Mesta?) who is appointed ambassador to the state of Lichten-burg and marries the foreign minister. Great performances by Ethel Merman, Donald O'Connor, George Sanders, Vera-Ellen, Walter Slezak and Billy de Wolfe.  
It's free.

## Dallin Committee gives thanks for gifts

The fundraising efforts of the Cyrus E. Dallin Committee have continued during the month of April and \$164 was donated, bringing the total collected for the two months of the campaign to \$396. The amounts being donated range from \$1 to \$100.  
The Board of Selectmen and the Dallin Committee express their thanks to the following individuals who have donated to the campaign so far: They are: Robert B. Walsh, Fred A. Greenwood, Mr. & Mrs. William Sullivan, Mr. & Mrs. C. Peter Jorgensen, John Warren, Thomas G. Gunn, Richard L. Sampson, James A. Greenwood, S. Mesher and R.G. Terry.  
Also contributing were: Duane L.

Grimes, Clarence F. Peirce, Edith E. White, Mr. & Mrs. Gilbert R. Miller, Frank P. Foster, David Dolan, Ellen M. McGough, James P. McGough and many anonymous donations.  
Donation can be made at any time, simply by sending a check in any amount to the Town of Arlington — Cyrus E. Dallin Committee and mail it to the Cyrus E. Dallin Committee, Office of the Board of Selectmen, 730 Mass. Ave., Arlington, Mass. 02174. A coupon should be filled out and sent along with your donation. They can be picked up at the following locations: the selectmen's Office, the Robbins, Fox and Dallin Libraries and the Town Barber Shop.

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# Meadows motion passes

(From page 1A)

or informing it of the results until after the fact.

Stephen Gilligan, chairman of the Conservation Commission, said that the commission "did not want to get into any tug of war with any board" over the fate of the wetlands.

But, in the resolution presented to the Town Meeting, he stressed that the Conservation Commission should and must be included in any discussion concerning the land's future.

Gilligan traced the rapid sequence of events that followed ACC's discovery of blue boundary flags at the meadows in December.

When the commission learned that the selectmen had been talking to First Golf Corporation of Denver, a golf-course development firm, Gilligan said, the ACC had to submit an under-the-wire Town Meeting article to ensure that the issue would be on the agenda this spring.

The article (number 15), sought "to transfer jurisdiction" of the meadows from the selectmen to the Conservation Commission.

But at a meeting between the two boards on April 10, the selectmen clearly indicated that they were not about to transfer any control. The Conservation Commission stated just as strongly that it was also not about to be excluded from any discussion or decision making over the future of Great Meadows.

An attempt at compromise came about with the draft of two substitute motions, one by Town Counsel John Maher, which he presented it to the ACC on April 24. Maher suggested that "a legal way for the commission to gain control over Great Meadows without the Board of Selectmen voting to release their jurisdiction would be for the (state) Legislature to amend the 1873 legislation (that gave control to the selectmen) to provide for joint jurisdiction" by both the ACC and the Board of Selectmen.

The substitute motion also con-

ained a "supremacy clause" which suggested that the state Legislature might have the power to supersede any decision by the town boards, and to arbitrate in disputes over the meadows.

That potential loss of any local control skuttled the substitute article. So the commission drew up the resolution.

Referring to the approximately 300 million cubic feet of water beneath the meadows, Maria Rutzmoser, a biologist with the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard and a member of the ACC, said Great Meadows "represents a little jewel... a relic, and a small part of what used to be a vast area of wetlands."

She added, "You can't remove one unit of an extensive network of wetlands" without affecting the surrounding area.

The study that the selectmen commissioned (the Gard/Shoenfeld report) concluded that "wetlands adjacent to large water bodies protect in many ways, the groundwater and drinking water supplies. Seeing Great Meadows as one cohesive wetland system was pleasantly surprising. It is unusual to find wetlands of this size in so urban an area."

To propose a golf course at Great Meadows, according to Rutzmoser, would be equivalent to "putting in a biological desert," which would involve a "vast expense of fertilizer and pesticides," much of which would drain into the groundwater and ultimately into the Arlington Reservoir — one of the few public areas where Arlington residents and their families can swim.

Bernice Jones of the Arlington Parks and Recreation Commission reminded Town Meeting members that the Parks Commission had also been granted powers to oversee the Meadows in 1900, and had not been consulted in any of the recent proceedings over the open space there.

Town Meeting member Linda

Olsen asked Alan McClennen Jr., director of planning and community development, how he could justify the use of \$13,985 from the town's Community Development Block Grant funds to study the Meadows when town budgets are being cut and when the selectmen could have used the resources of the Arlington Conservation Commission.

McClennen said Town Meeting had allocated money for "planning studies." He added he could not find any map delineating the wetlands boundary, and therefore commissioned a study to determine it.

Town Manager Donald R. Marquis told Town Meeting that an additional \$10,000 is being spent on a study to see if there is a need for a nine-hole golf course in the area.

The loudest applause of the evening came when Whittle, of the Conservation Commission, characterized the controversy as "Meadowgate."

Marquis and Selectman Kevin Greely took offense at the tenor of the May 3 meeting. Greely emphatically said he "didn't like the implication about where the study and the money for it came from."

He went on to add that the ACC had met twice with the Board of Selectmen, that there had been communication between the two bodies, and that discussion had been directed toward a compromise. He felt that the Conservation Commission should have been consulted more, but to implicate the selectmen, demanding that they answer to the ACC, was not fair play.

Robert Walsh, vice chairman of the selectmen, concluded that he was "not at all sure that a golf course would work at Great Meadows," but that he still wanted to find out.

Earlier that same day, at the moot Town Meeting held by Arlington High School students, the body politic there was a little more certain. They voted to put in a golf course at Great Meadows.

## Fun in the sun



Solar car engineer James Worden navigates his vehicle down Mass. Avenue in traffic last week during a filming of a movie on his car for the Transportation Museum.

## Mass. Ave. retailer closing doors

(From page 1A)

determined by the number of square feet in a property, and the price is now around \$30 per square foot in Arlington.

"For that kind of money, you need an area where lots of people mill around. The landlords seem to have the impression that Arlington is Harvard Square in Cambridge or Coolidge Corner in Brookline, which are pedestrian areas. We don't have a Filene's or an Ann & Hope to bring

people to this town. If people want to come to a specific store, they do. It's hard for a small retail business to afford a large rent. Arlington would be a good place to do business if the cost of doing business here was kept down."

In looking for a new tenant for the space, Pasciuto seeks "someone with a quality business, who is not only financially strong, but has a good background in business. I want someone who will be good for every-

one involved — our town, Frank Pasciuto, and our citizens — and someone who will stay here for a long time. Arlington is not a second-class town. It deserves to have the best businesses we can bring in."

Newhouse plans to return to teaching high school, his profession before entering the retail business in Arlington. "I wish everyone well. We enjoyed our customers and the other merchants in the town," Newhouse concluded.

## Finalists for principal announced

The three finalists for the high school principalship will be visiting Arlington in the next several days. We welcome parents to come and meet the candidates. They will be available from 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. on the following dates in the School Committee Room, sixth floor, Arlington High School:

Friday, May 12: Joseph Barnes

Monday, May 15: Joan Carr

Wednesday, May 17: Charles McCarthy

Each candidate will be interviewed by the School Committee during its May 23 meeting. The meeting will be held in the committee's room, at 7:30 p.m. A recommendation for appointment is expected that evening.

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# Town Meeting wades through budgets

(From page 1A)

Before debate and voting on each budget began, O'Neill explained the revenue distribution with a model. After "must costs," such as tipping fees, special education, water and sewer expenditures, and pensions, are taken out of the total revenue, the remainder is divided among departments with predetermined percentages.

- Town Meeting voted \$9,849 for the Finance Committee down \$151 from last year.
- The Board of Selectmen's total budget, divided into six sections, came to \$237,419, down \$56,860.
- The town manager's office was voted \$160,386, up \$8,039. The budget increase included a \$3,960 salary increase for Town Manager Donald R. Marquis, leading one Town Meeting member, Fred Sennott Jr. from precinct 17, to note that the salary of \$83,167 is more than Governor Michael Dukakis makes.
- Purchasing got \$51,032, personnel, \$116,342, comptroller, \$188,083, data processing, \$497,033, and telephone, \$163,492. All five passed with little or no debate.
- Town Meeting approved \$365,373 for the Treasurer-Collector department (down \$7,486), and \$98,053 for Postage (down \$2,009).
- The Board of Assessors budget dropped \$3,483 to \$186,498, and was passed unanimously by Town Meeting.
- The Legal Department jumped \$18,250 to \$116,536. The increase included a \$5,154 salary increase (to \$56,708) for Town Counsel John Maher.
- The town clerk's budget decreased \$2,225 to \$125,028, and the Board of Registrars dropped \$4,717 to \$60,068. Both budgets passed unanimously.



Town Meeting Moderator John Worden, left, confers with Al an McClennen, director of planning and community development, before Monday's session. (Barbara Bergen photo)

- Parking's budget was \$50,974, a decrease of \$1,044. Of that, \$22,000 will come from the Parking Fund. John Balafer, the parking clerk, who is also the town treasurer, received a \$469 raise to \$9,843. Balafer receives a separate salary under the town's Treasury Department.
- Town Meeting approved a \$131,433 budget for the Department of Planning and Community Development. The increase of \$10,317 includes salary increases for three department members: The director's salary went up \$5,335 to \$57,895, the assistant director's salary went up \$3,013 to \$43,645, and the head clerk's salary went up \$1,629 to \$23,766.

The debate included a request from Elsie Fiore, precinct 2, for an

update of projects currently going on in town.

- The Redevelopment Board's expenses stayed the same at \$7,995, and were approved.
- The Zoning Board of Appeals got \$20,600, up \$1,050.
- The budgets for the Properties and Natural Resources departments were approved at \$233,296 and \$653,541, respectively. Both budgets were up from last year. Properties budget was up \$25,903, and the Natural Resources budget was up \$6,140.
- The cemeteries budget, passed unanimously, was down \$2,969 to \$342,280. A portion of that, \$40,400, will come from the Lots and Graves Fund voted in warrant article 65.

- The Engineering Department dropped \$11,746 to \$267,028. Warrant article charges from capital projects pay for \$29,000 of that budget.
- Only half of the Public Works Department budget was approved before Monday's meeting adjourned. The budget has to be approved in five parts: roadway maintenance was approved at \$1,088,419, down \$289,523, the sanitation sub-budget, up \$208,006 to \$2,498,389, was voted in; and general administration was approved at \$308,803, up \$18,934.

The remainder of the D.P.W. budget, sewer and water maintenance, was scheduled for debate Wednesday.

# Layoff notices sent to 47 tenured teachers

(From page 1A)

On the first vote, School Committee Member Patricia Worden voted "no" and called for a roll call. After the vote she said she was against the committee's actions related to the budgets because, she said, the cuts were "devastating, and I believe, immoral."

Forty-four of the 47 votes were 7 to 1, with Worden voting a consistent no at the call of each name. The tenured teachers represented more than 558 years of teaching experience, Devine told the committee.

The large number of layoffs of tenured teachers is necessary, said Assistant Superintendent Joanne Gurry, because, "There are so few non-tenured teachers left in the system, anywhere."

Some of the teachers affected were in the audience Tuesday, although none addressed the committee. Ironically for the teachers, they had received a letter on Monday from Superintendent Devine recognizing their work during national Teachers' Week.

The School Committee had to cut \$1.5 million from its budget proposal make the bottom line match the number recommended by the Finance Committee to Town Meeting.

Under an agreement with town officials, the schools receive 52.26 percent of the town's finances. That 52 percent is doled out after about \$30 million is set aside for expenses the town cannot control.

The Finance Committee's recom-

mendation was \$19.1 million, down from the \$20 million the School Committee had originally sought and about \$300,000 less than the current school budget. The education budget was expected to come before Town Meeting on Wednesday, after The Advocate's press deadline.

If an override of Proposition 2½ at a June 10 special election succeeds, the schools will receive an additional nearly \$600,000. Prop. 2½ limits the rise in local property tax to 2.5 percent annually.

To trim the nearly \$1.5 million from its budget, the School Committee voted earlier this year to close the Gibbs Junior High School in East Arlington (a \$534,000 savings), eliminate 13 teaching positions at the high school along with two teachers

in elementary and junior high school music, cut the co-curricular and athletic programs and a reduce funds for textbooks and supplies.

In a related matter, the School Committee heard from Sen. Richard A. Kraus, D-Arlington, who outlined a proposal for tax reform at the state level. (See related story.) Kraus also discussed how the town's financial situation relates to the rest of the state.

"The kinds of problems Arlington had been facing alone are now being experienced by a majority of the communities in the commonwealth," said Kraus. "All but eight [of 351 municipalities], that we know of, will make substantial cuts in their education systems this year."

# Sen. Kraus sponsors bill for income tax surcharge

(From page 1A)

Those concerned that this money will disappear into the state's coffers never to be seen again need not worry, according to Kraus. The half-

point tax added to the earned income will be collected by the state and then be returned directly to cities and towns.

The full percentage point tax added to the 10-percent tax on

unearned income will be put into a fund that will help defray property-tax payments for low- and moderate-income people who pay more than 8 percent of property taxes.

The new local income tax, if passed, could generate close to \$4 million for Arlington in fiscal year 1991, according to a press release from Kraus' office.

Kraus hopes that the bill will be addressed this year, but still, even if passed, the relief would not begun to be felt until fiscal year 1991.

"This proposal at best would begin to provide local relief in fiscal 1991 and beyond. For the upcoming fiscal year, FY 1990, Arlington's only hope of avoiding severe cuts in services, especially in education, is the (Proposition 2½) override slated for vote on June 10th," the senator said.

Kraus said this form of growth from taxes would be much fairer, with less of a burden on the elderly.

In communities such as Arlington, sole dependence on property taxes puts a heavy burden on the elderly who may have property that is rising in value but are living on a fixed income. They are often caught in a financial squeeze.

"This revenue base requires most from those who can least afford to

pay, so we always face the really obscene choice that in order to adequately fund needed services we may force the least well off, especially senior citizens, out of their homes," said the release from the Kraus office.

The new income tax would allow revenue to keep pace with rising incomes which, according to the release, "in Arlington are well above the state average."

According to Kraus, the two bills that make up the package have been well received. In the state Senate the bills, filed two weeks ago, had five co-sponsors. In the House, the bill was filed one week ago and had more than 30 co-sponsors, the most co-sponsors anyone can remember, Kraus said.

Public testimony for the bills will be heard May 16 at 10:30 a.m. by the Taxation Committee. If the Taxation Committee passes the bills, they will go to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Kraus is optimistic about the bills, although he acknowledged that any move that has to do with raising taxes is difficult in the Legislature these days.

"But in the next year or two we will clearly have to do something about local revenue," he said.

## POLICE LOG

### Arrests

On May 2, a 24-year-old Dorchester man was arrested on Mass. Avenue and charged with operating without a license.

A 27-year-old Brattle Place man was arrested May 2 on Mass. Avenue at Franklin Street and charged with speeding and operating after revocation of his license.

A 28-year-old Somerville man was arrested May 2 on Summer Street at Oak Hill Drive and charged with operating without a license, receiving stolen property, to wit license plates, driving an uninsured and unregistered motor vehicle, attaching plates, and driving without an inspection sticker.

On May 2, a 20-year-old Woburn man was arrested on Mystic Street and charged with operating after suspension of his license, operating and unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, and attaching plates.

On May 4, a 37-year-old East Boston woman was arrested on Mass. Avenue and charged with uttering a prescription, receiving stolen property. The woman was trying to use prescriptions stolen from the Massachusetts Mental Health Office in Somerville. She was also found to be in default of a Watertown warrant and a Framingham warrant.

On May 5, a 39-year-old Brattle Street man was arrested on Brattle Street and charged with operating without a license. He was stopped for driving with a defective headlight.

A 20-year-old Ronald Road man was arrested on Eastern Avenue and charged with drinking in public. He was seen drinking beer on the steps of the Brackett School.

On May 5, a 30-year-old Grandview Road man was arrested on Mass. Avenue on a defaulted State Police traffic warrant.

A 19-year-old Spy Pond Parkway woman was arrested May 5 on Mystic Street and charged with operating after suspension of her license.

On May 5, a 28-year-old Cambridge man was arrested near Cameron Avenue and charged with receiving stolen property. He was seen driving a boat and trailer worth \$5,000 that had been reported missing from a Hamilton Road residence. The Cambridge man was an acquaintance of the boat's owner and had done some work for the man. According to police, the Cambridge man took the boat "as payment" after some sort of dispute.

A 17-year-old Belmont man and a 19-year-old Winter Street man were arrested on Mass. Avenue and charged with being minors transporting alcohol. Police stopped them after observing the two traveling at a high rate of speed in their 1988 Chevrolet. The driver, the Belmont man, was also charged with speeding.

Three Arlington residents, an 18-year-old Newcomb Street man, an 18-year-old Broadway man and a 17-year-old Westminster Avenue woman, were arrested May 5 at Willow Court and charged with being minors in possession of alcohol. The three are part of the group of youths creating disturbances at the high school, and causing damage to the Willow Wash laundromat, the high school, and the area behind the Baptist Church, police said. Two other 16-year-olds, one from Franklin Street and the other from Arlington Street, were taken to the police station in protective custody.

On May 6, a 20-year-old Wilmington man was arrested on Lake Street and charged with operating after revocation of his license, operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, and attaching plates.

A 19-year-old Lexington man was arrested on Whittemore Street and charged with being a minor in possession of alcohol, and operating without a license.

On May 7, a 47-year-old Abington man was arrested on Fremont Street and charged with violating a restraining order, and assault and battery on a family member. He had visited his ex-wife's house and, after she repeatedly asked him to leave, allegedly hit her.

A 35-year-old Chandler Street man was arrested May 7 on Elmhurst

Street for being in default of a State Police Framingham warrant for speeding.

### Larcenies

On May 1, a Gardiner Street woman reported a male in a red hooded sweatshirt had taken a boys 20-inch, white bicycle worth \$100.

A Mill Street Doctor told police May 1 a man in his 30s, medium height with a beard and wearing a tan jacket, had taken his brown wallet containing \$13, gold cards, two blank prescriptions, and personal papers.

On May 1, a Maine man told police an NEC VCR was taken from his 1981 Ford parked on Brookdale Road. The car's front passenger window was also damaged.

On May 2, a Fremont Street man reported a black Go-Kart worth \$500 was taken sometime during the weekend.

A Herbert Road man told police May 2 an AM/FM radio worth \$400 was taken from his car. The dashboard was also damaged.

A Whittemore Street man told police May 2 a window of his 1989 Ford had been smashed and an AM/FM cassette player was missing.

On May 5, a Lombard Road man reported his garage door had been forced open and a radar detector was taken from his 1988 Acura.

On May 6, an Overlook Road man told police a CB radio, a Radio Shack scanner, and a Nynex cellular phone had been taken from his 1986 Ford pickup truck.

A Summer Street man reported May 6 an AM/FM radio had been taken from his car and a side window was broken.

### Vandalism

On May 2, a Herbert Road man reported the side window of his car had been smashed on Lafayette Street.

Arlington town officials reported May 2 that an unknown person had driven a vehicle onto the wet, soft grass in the right-field area of the ball field at Robbins Farm Park.

On May 2, an Amsden Street man told police the side window of his 1987 Volkswagen had been smashed while parked in the driveway.

A Whittemore Street man told police May 3 the dashboard of his 1984 Toyota had been damaged the night before.

On May 4, Dorrian's Lab on Mill Street told police a four-by-six-foot window had been damaged by BB shots during the night.

On May 5, a New Hampshire man reported the windshield of his 1985 Ford had been broken in the Mill Street parking lot.

A Bates Road woman told police May 5 the passenger door of her 1985 Toyota had been scratched and the door molding damaged.

On May 6, a Chester Street woman reported 12 feet of white wooden fence was broken during the night.

A Woodland Street man reported May 6 a tree fell on his 1983 Buick, damaging the roof.

A Thorndike Street man told police May 6 a tree fell on his car, breaking the windshield and damaging the roof.

On May 6, a Mass. Avenue woman reported the taillight and the radio antennae of her 1988 Hyundai had been broken during the night.

A Newport Street man told police May 6 the front windshield of his 1978 Datsun had been broken during the night.

A Mystic Valley Parkway woman reported May 7 a 3-by-5-foot window had been broken by BB shots sometime during the night.

On May 7, a Teel Street man reported the side window of his 1988 Volkswagen had been broken sometime the night before.

### Miscellaneous

On May 1, a Westminster Avenue woman alleged her ex-husband, a Charlestown man, had threatened her.

A Viking Court woman told police May 3 her former roommate had threatened her.

On May 7, a Varnum Street man reported he had been threatened by a Wilmington man. The Wilmington man said the Varnum Street man had been bothering his sister.

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**Health Views**

DR. JOHN DEFILIPPO

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# Symmes seeks input on services

(From page 1A)  
consideration seem likely to fall more heavily on Choate Hospital in Woburn than on Symmes Hospital in Arlington. The health service is considering such options as closing Choate, converting it to a psychiatric hospital, or closing some acute care beds in Choate in favor of expanding psychiatric services.  
Despite the relatively high attendance, few of those present at the meeting made any public comment. Among those who did speak, most

stressed the importance of providing adequate medical care for Arlington's elderly population and offered support for the "status quo" option, which would leave both hospitals as they are.  
One such speaker was Catherine Sonnenberg, a lifelong Arlington resident who argued that "now is a critical time for health care, with the town's aging population." In order to maintain the high quality of care in Arlington, Sonnenberg said, both hospitals should keep their cur-

rent number of beds.  
Similarly, Arlington doctor Gerald Harris said he was sometimes frustrated with the limited number of existing hospital beds, and worried that cuts at Choate might shift more patients to Symmes. "We cannot handle an overflow from Choate for internal-medicine care," he said.  
William Flynn, director of the medical/surgery unit at Choate-Symmes, took the opportunity to describe the special role he felt the hospitals play in their communities.

Choate and Symmes are "community hospitals," he said. "We have a lot of personalized care, and people who devote their careers here instead of going off someplace else."  
This kind of care "cannot be offered at large hospitals," Flynn continued. "Choate is needed in its community."  
The committee will hold a companion meeting in Woburn on May 15 and will make its final recommendation to the Conversion Board on June 5.

## BEACON HILL ROLL CALL

**Beacon Hill Roll Call**  
Volume 15 — Report No. 17  
Massachusetts House and Senate  
May 1-5, 1989

**The House.** "Beacon Hill Roll Call" records local representatives' votes on five roll calls from the week of May 1 to 5.

**Drugs (H 4512)** — House 116-38, rejected a bill requiring doctors to report drug overdoes, except legally prescribed drugs, to the Public Safety Commissioner and the local Chief of Police. Supporters said mandating reporting will help the battle against drugs by helping police locate dealers. Opponents said the bill will result in users not seeking treatment.

A "Yea" vote is for the bill. A "Nay" vote is against it.  
Representative Robert Havern voted no.  
Representative Mary Jane Gibson voted no.

**Deeds Excise (H 5527)** — House 86-63, gave final approval and sent to the Senate a bill doubling the excise tax charged on real estate from \$2.28 to \$4.56 per \$1,000 of valuation. The bill, expected to raise \$45 million in new revenue annually, requires that 75 percent of the funds be used for county jail operations, 10 percent for automating registries of deeds offices, and 15 percent for some counties to borrow to meet 1989 deficits. Supporters said the bill is unfair tax on homeowners and will hurt many people.  
A "Yea" vote is for the bill. A "Nay" vote is against it.  
Havern voted no.  
Gibson voted yes.

**\$175,000 (H 5527)** — House 84-69, rejected an amendment exempting the first \$175,000 value of any personal residence from the deeds excise increase. Amendment supporters said this would soften the impact on the average homeowner who otherwise would be forced to pay almost \$500 in additional taxes. Opponents said the amendment would substantially decrease revenues and noted the \$500 is not an undue hardship in light of the profits from an average home sale.  
A "Yea" vote is for the amendment. A "Nay" vote is against it.  
Havern voted no.  
Gibson voted no.

**To Counties (H 5527)** — House 92-60, rejected an amendment returning to each county the revenue it gained from the increased deeds excise tax and eliminating the provision setting up a state finance board which would act on funding requests by counties. Amendment supporters said this home rule amendment would give counties more control and expressed concern that the state would act slowly and hold onto money. Opponents said the amendment is an attempt to resurrect government and weaken the bill.  
A "Yea" vote is for the amendment. A "Nay" vote is against it.  
Havern voted no.  
Gibson voted no.

**Treasurer (S 1727)** — House first defeated 83-68, then approved 75-72 a bill providing life tenure until age 70 for City of Revere Treasurer George Anzuoni. Supporters, noting this is a home rule petition approved by Revere's Mayor and City Council, said 37 year old Anzuoni has done an

outstanding job and claimed his job could be in jeopardy if a new administration wins. Opponents said this is a special interest bill which helps one individual and claimed it is a bad policy.  
(Both roll calls are listed. The first is on defeat 82-26. The second is on passage 75-72.)  
A "Yea" vote is for the bill. A "Nay" vote is against it.  
Havern voted no.  
Gibson voted yes.

**Guns (H 1790)** — House 96-47, rejected a bill further restricting the issuance of gun licenses and giving the local police chief or licensing authority more discretion in giving out the licenses. Supporters said the present law does not go far enough and does not prohibit people with a violent history and others from obtaining a license. Opponents said the present law is sufficient and claimed the bill puts too much power in the hands of one person.  
A "Yea" vote is for the bill. A "Nay" vote is against it.  
Havern voted no.  
Gibson voted yes.

**The Senate.** "Beacon Hill Roll Call" records local senators' votes on five roll calls from the week of May 1 to 5. All roll calls deal with attempts to change Senate rules.

**Ethics** — Senate 22-13, rejected an amendment requiring that the Senate Ethics Committee include six members with three appointed by the Senate President and three by the Minority Leader. This would replace the current five member committee with four appointed by the Senate President and one by the Minority Leader. Amendment sup-

porters said this would stop control of this very important committee by one political party and would be fairer. Opponents offered no arguments.  
A "Yea" vote is for the amendment. A "Nay" vote is against it.  
Kraus voted no.

**Roll Call** — Senate 20-15, rejected an amendment requiring a roll call vote on any bill which changes the state's tax laws and has an impact of more than \$5 million. Amendment supporters said the voters have a right to know how their senators vote on tax issues. Opponents offered no arguments.  
A "Yea" vote is for the amendment. A "Nay" vote is against it.  
Kraus voted no.

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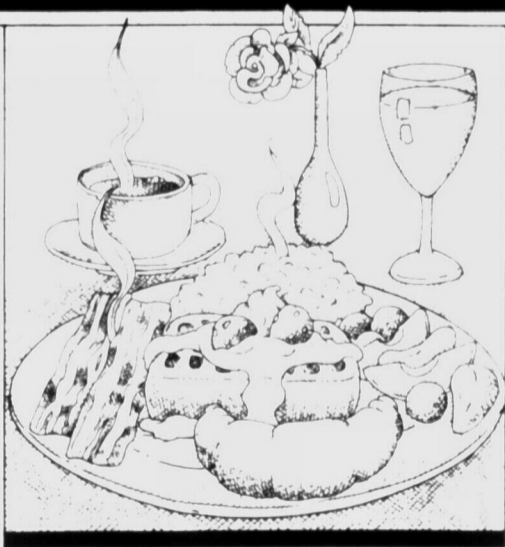
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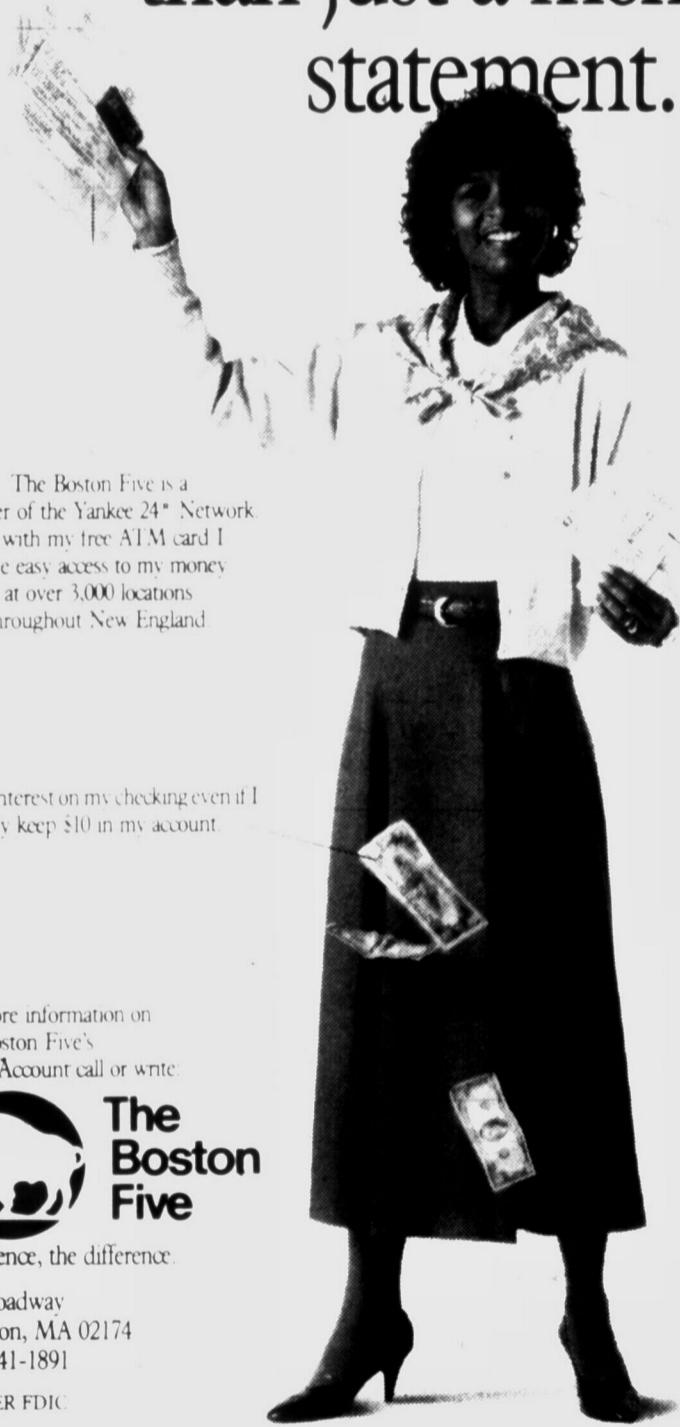
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# Roundup of Town meeting actions

A group of four articles, 16 through 19, concerning retirement benefits were voted "no action" by Town Meeting. The articles were put on hold pending state legislation.

**Article 20 — Health insurance plan.**  
Though some expected a battle over the new health insurance premiums for town employees, the debate was limited to an amendment that deleted a subsection deemed unnecessary from the article.

The amendment, presented by Alan Kaplan, precinct 15, eliminated subsection 1 of the article and changed subsections 2 and 3 to subsection 1 and 2.

The original subsection 1 described the restrictions of the health insurance plan for abortions, in phrasing taken directly from state law, according to Town Counsel John Maher.

Deleting it from the article did not remove it from state law, according to Maher, but simply removed the redundancy and maintained Town Meeting's position of neutrality.

Kaplan said he did not feel the subsection was appropriate for Town Meeting, especially since Town Meeting was voting on a health insurance policy, and not on an abortion issue.

The debate also included a flyer distributed by the town manager's office explaining some issues concerning the new premiums.

The amendment was passed 114 to 24, and article 20 was passed by a substantial majority.

**Article 21 — Board of Library Trustees.**

The Board of Library Trustees will now have seven members instead of five, as Town Meeting voted unanimously to pass article 21. The article was titled an amendment to the Town Manager Act of 1952, and was inserted at the request of the Board of Library Trustees.

A work overload was cited as the reason for the increase in trustee positions.

**Article 22 — Mapping Commission.**

Arlington residents will now be getting a better sense of the town's geography. Town Meeting agreed wholeheartedly to establish a mapping committee by passing article 22.

Article 22 was inserted at the request of the town manager.

Arlington has been asked to sit on the state Geographic Commission, according to Alan McClellan Jr., director of planning and community development.

"We would like to be the first community in Massachusetts to have a mapping commission," said McClellan. The new commission will require no local appropriation.

**Article 24 — Photo to be Attached to Demolition Application.**

If you want to demolish your house, from now on you will have to get out your camera first. Town Meeting voted overwhelmingly to require that an application for a building demolition permit be

accompanied by a photograph of the property to be razed.

The impetus for this article, inserted at the request of the town manager, came from a mixup last fall that resulted in the demolition of the historic St. James Rectory on Appleton Street.

The photo "would have saved us some embarrassment," said Board of Selectmen Chairman Charles Lyons.

**Article 25 — Bylaw change.**

Handing out pamphlets and congregating in public places is now once again legal in Arlington. Town Meeting voted to delete provisions in a bylaw that were not only archaic but unconstitutional.

Section 9 of the Article 9 of the bylaws of the town included the wording "nor shall habitually congregate with others on such ways or sidewalks." Section 22 related to the "distribution of handbills etc. on public ways. Both were provisions were deleted.

"It is unconstitutional to prohibit assembly," said Town Counsel John Maher.

Striking the provisions is only a formality since Director of Police John Carroll has not been enforcing the bylaw and has warned members of the police department of the unconstitutionality of enforcing it, according to Maher.

Article 25, inserted at the request of the town manager, was passed unanimously.

## NEWS NOTES

### Energy coalition lobbies Kraus

Sen. Richard Kraus' (D-Arlington) staff met with several constituents on April 19, which was Save Energy Coalition's lobbying day at the State House. The House Budget eliminated the Executive Office of Energy Resources (EOER), and coalition members were at the State House to urge Senators to put the Energy Office back in the budget.

The energy coalition advocates stressed that the state's energy programs can't afford to lose the coordinated leadership of the Executive Office of Energy Resources. Massachusetts has been a national leader in establishing energy conservation programs, and in order to deal with the current energy and environmental crisis the Energy Office must not be dismantled.

Agreeing with the energy advocates, Senator Kraus said "the Executive Office of Energy Resources implements many important state energy policies and programs that save Massachusetts' consumers millions of dollars each year in energy costs." Kraus added, "I will be lobbying the Senate Ways and Means Chair to reinstate the Energy Office, but without a new revenue package reinstatement may be more difficult."

### Kennedy meets with educators

Representative Joseph P. Kennedy II met with Eighth Congressional District Mass Teachers Association leaders at Garron's restaurant in Arlington on April 14 to discuss education funding and issues.

Dawny Gershkowitz of Arlington, Joanne Coakley, an Arlington High School counselor, and Alice O'Brien, a Cambridge teacher, met with Kennedy to urge him to support additional funds in education programs to keep pace with inflation and enrollment, and to service students eligible but currently not served in federal government programs.

In a lengthy dinner meeting, the educators thanked Kennedy for his support and for co-sponsoring the Family and Medical Leave Act and the Child Development and Education Act. They also discussed local concerns and plans for future meetings with educators in a larger forum. Gershkowitz will be meeting with Kennedy in Washington next month to follow up on the meeting.

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## At the end of the tunnel



Four-year-old Mikey Courtney crawls out of yet another jam while playing at the Thompson School playground recently.  
(George C. Ferrar photo)

## "You're taking me where?"

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**Pharmacy  
Footnotes**

by Richard B. Murray, R.Ph. and Peter O'Reilly, R.Ph.

### REAL MEDICINE

Doctors and research scientists performing clinical trials of new drugs have long been aware of what is called the "placebo effect". This refers to the fact that many patients known to be receiving placebos instead of drugs report feeling better, and often show improvement in physical symptoms as well. A placebo is an inert substance made to appear indistinguishable from an authentic drug. An inactive ingredient such as sugar or cornstarch is substituted for the active drug. The most common use of a placebo is in the testing of new drugs to provide evaluation by comparison. Also, a placebo may be prescribed when there is no apparent organic basis for an illness. The "placebo effect" is attributed to psychological factors. Because the patient expects that the drug will work, it does.

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GUEST COLUMNS

Looking for some feedback on user fees

By KATHARINE DALEY FENNELLY  
Special to The Advocate

I wrote this article in February, at a time when the School Committee was grappling with a projected budget deficit of almost 2 million dollars and conflicting reports about the amount of state aide we might receive. We were trying to prioritize programs, special education, building maintenance, supplies etc. in the face of uncertainty.

Now the figures are in. Our school budget for 1989-90 is less than for this current year.

A successful override of Proposition 2½ will restore some of the cuts. In the meantime, we have had to make some painful decisions that have a far reaching and negative impact on education in Arlington. The financial erosion of the past 8 years has had a prolonged and deleterious effect on the quality of education in this town. The fact that we are still able to produce scholars is a credit to our dedicated teachers and supportive parents.

We who are involved in education know how farther and farther behind. The question of user fees is but one of many small, significant decisions which we have had to make this year.

In addition to cutting several academic subjects from K-12, the budgets for freshman and junior varsity athletic teams, instrumental music lessons, and some extracurricular activities are being reduced.

To cover some of their costs, the high school already charges admission fees for some of our athletic events, as well as for the drama department's annual Gilbert & Sullivan production. In the past, cheerleaders paid for their own uniforms. Instrumental music participants rent or buy their own equipment. Many teams and clubs raise funds for one purpose or another. It would seem that the groundwork to institute user fees for athletics and extracurricular activities has already been laid.

However, for the first time students would be asked to pay for something that we, as a town, have established as an integral part of education. The School Committee has approved a plan to eliminate some extra and co-curricular clubs at the High School, with the remaining clubs subject to a modest activity fee. Under consideration is a fee structure for Athletics with costs ranging from \$65 to \$125 a year per sport. Instrumental music will be offered with a tentative fee of \$50. Intramural athletics at the junior high will be partially funded. Seventh and eighth grade students will be asked to raise an additional \$5,000 to offset expenses.

Many students are introduced to instrumental music, band, and orchestra at the elementary level and continue their participation in junior high and high school. High

school is an appropriate time for students to begin athletic competition and to explore developing interests in a variety of clubs, ranging from service to the community to putting out a school newspaper. Most of our students participate in either athletics or clubs during their four years in high school.

Within the relative safety and non-threatening atmosphere of the high school setting and with the guidance and support of a coach or advisor, students can spread their wings. These activities help teenagers develop new skills and give them the opportunity to use these newly acquired skills among their peers, to develop leadership abilities, team spirit, and cooperation, and to extend their knowledge beyond the classroom in a very practical and useful way.

Charging for what we, as a town, have always considered an intrinsic part of education creates a conundrum. One of the basic tenets of public schools is that all students should have free and equal access to education. User fees for any academic curriculum items are strictly against the law. Athletics and clubs are considered co-curricular activities. In other words, they support many aspects of the curriculum but are not part of the curriculum.

A Good Education

Up to this point, our school system has been able to prepare students for life after high school — for employment or, for the majority of Arlington High graduates, for a college education. The greatest part of this preparation takes place in the classroom, but an equally significant portion takes place after school on the playing fields, in club meetings, and in orchestra concerts and trips. A good education is one that prepares a student intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially. By putting a price tag on a student's physical or emotional or social growth, are we shortchanging his or her education?

Personally, I regard the consideration of such fees as a necessary evil. I can't justify supporting these activities to the detriment of academic subjects, and yet I believe that both are important to a full and complete education.

User fees would make only a small difference to the complete school budget but would, perhaps, make a symbolic difference to the whole financial situation of the school system. Would you support students being charged a user fee for participation on a team or club? Would a fee have positive effect on the bottom line of the school budget but a negative effect on student participation? I'd like to hear what you think. Please call me if you have an opinion at 648-1794 or write to me at 97 Gray Street.

Cap on taxes costing town too much

By WILLIAM M. CAPRON  
Special to The Advocate

When asked how we feel about paying taxes, most of us say we don't like to do so. Our political and public language reveals our deep seated bias against taxes. We speak of the "tax burden," we say "taxes are killing me." When a candidate says "no new taxes" as he invites us to read his lips, we elect him overwhelmingly to be our president.

I spent last year in England where Margaret Thatcher has had a remarkably long tenure as prime minister with much of her support coming from those who welcomed her tax cutting policies. But there are growing signs that she and her party are coming to the end of their unbeatable popularity. Complaints about the deterioration of various public services from the health care system to the schools to the venerable and once-wonderful public transport system are mounting.

Even backbenchers in the Tory party are increasingly bold in expressing disenchantment with the effects of systematic and sustained underfunding of valued public services. I suggest that we in Massachusetts, and specifically here in Arlington, will echo the same concerns in growing numbers. Some of us are already concerned and are supporting an override in Prop. 2½.

Unlike the money we spend on the goods and services we buy directly for our own use — new cars, new clothes, vacations, going to the movies (or these days renting a film or video) — we don't directly relate our tax dollars to the wide variety of public service we consume day in and day out. Because there is no direct connection between our property tax payment and street repair, police protection, snow removal and public education, it is easy to forget just how much we rely on the many services our tax dollars support.

Since we don't each value highly each public service, it is easy to focus our unhappiness over taxes by pointing to those services we don't use or care about ourselves. A big

example of this is the way we exchange gripes about what some of us regard as the high cost of the public schools when we no longer have children in the schools. This is a natural reaction but those of us whose offspring are past school age need to ask ourselves about our own interest in the quality of Arlington Schools. Most of us care about the value of our homes and the kind of neighbors we have. Since the quality of the public schools in a town has a major influence on both of these things in which we have a real stake, we all have a real interest in the school budget.

Why is this the year to override Prop. 2½? Let me summarize why I have come to this position even though I, like almost all of us, don't like paying taxes.

1) Arlington is a well managed town. I believe we are fortunate in having a town government which is efficient in its use of resources. Under Prop. 2½ during the past eight years considerable belt tightening has squeezed out more marginal activities and left us with a lean government.

2) Proposition 2½ has meant a progressive reduction in the quantity of services the town is able to deliver, measured in real terms. This is made clear when we recognize that the property tax has been limited to a 7.6 percent increase over the past eight years while the cost of living has increased more than 27 percent in that period (more than 3 percent per year). In other words, we have had on the average a 2 percent per year cut in property tax revenues measured in constant dollars.

3) As budgets are squeezed over a number of years, the impact on public services is uneven. Some town functions can't be cut in a proportionate way with others. Specifically, activities like library services and service to the elderly are easier to trim back than garbage collection and snow plowing. Thus the brunt of Prop. 2½ over time hits some citizens much harder than

others.

4) One inevitable reaction to the Prop. 2½ budget squeeze is that we defer some activities which don't have to be done right away. For example, street and public building maintenance can be postponed with out much immediate effect. For two or three years this doesn't hurt the quality of the town noticeably. But beyond a relatively short time deferred maintenance begins to have a cumulative bad effect. It may also cost a lot more to do these deferred jobs if we wait to fund them.

5) Compared to earlier years, the 1960s, and 1970s, Arlington residents are paying a smaller fraction of their income in taxes than they were. One important reason the override is called for in 1989 is that the earlier cuts in Massachusetts state taxes, repeal of the surcharges has forced the Commonwealth this year to level fund Arlington's aid. This is a drastic change from the policy of recent years which has seen the state partially offsetting the impact of Prop. 2½ on Arlington.

6) While property taxes do loom relatively large for many senior residents, this group is consistently helped by annual increases in social security benefits which keep pace with rises in the cost of living.

There are also tax abatements and tax deferrals available to low income elderly. Average COLA increases this year are substantially larger than the typical property tax increase (\$14) which will result if the override is approved.

In short, I think that by now Prop. 2½ is beginning to force budget cuts that are leading to serious reductions in the quality and quantity of important public services in Arlington. I don't much want to vote to increase my taxes, but I do want to retain and support the things that make this a good place to live and to own property.

Therefore, I think the proposed override of Prop. 2½ is necessary if we are to be prudent in guarding our own self interest. To vote against the override is to be "penny wise and pound foolish."

William M. Capron is a resident of Arlington.


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